

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

OPENING OF THE MEDICAL SESSION

AT

GUY'S HOSPITAL,

OCTOBER 1, 1858.

BY

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TREASURER OF THE HOSPITAL.

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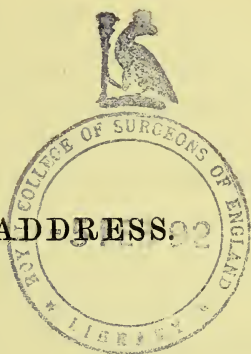


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GENTLEMEN,

My appearance before you on this occasion, if it require no apology, calls, perhaps, for some explanation. It has been usual, in the medical schools of this Metropolis, for the Inaugural Address at the commencement of the Session to be delivered by one of the Medical Staff; and, as a general rule, there can be no doubt that this is the most convenient and proper course. It is well that those who are entering upon their professional duties, (and it is to such that the Inaugural Address is principally directed,) should be greeted by one who has himself a practical knowledge of the road which they have to traverse, and whose personal experience enables him to give them the most useful directions for the prosecution of their journey. But, although the above considerations amply justify the general practice which I have adverted to, there are reasons, not to be disregarded, which render an occasional deviation from that practice not merely warrantable, but desirable. You are come to prose-

cute your studies within the walls of a great Hospital, to the Governors of which the Medical School owes its existence, and out of the funds of which the Museum, the Theatres, the Library, and the other buildings employed in the conduct of the School, were originally constructed, and are still kept up and maintained. The School, as an adjunct to the Hospital, and carried on within its precincts, necessarily falls under the superintendence and direction of the Hospital Authorities; and I stand here this morning to welcome you on the behalf of my colleagues and on my own, to this magnificent foundation, and to assure you of the warm interest which is felt by us all in the prosperity of the School, and in the welfare and success of its members. I am here to assure you that, whilst you are enjoying the benefit (and you can hardly appreciate the benefit too highly) of studying the practice within this large Hospital, under the guidance of its able Staff, the Governors are not insensible to the reciprocal advantages which the patients derive from your presence amongst them:—not only through the direct aid afforded by such of the pupils as are actually engaged in their relief, but also through the watchfulness and intelligence of those who are simply employed in examining their symptoms, and observing their progress. I would have you to believe, moreover, that the Governors are not indifferent to the lustre which the Hospital derives from the distinction and the

reputation of its students. Still less must you suppose them blind to the advantages conferred upon the country at large by that numerous body of practitioners who year by year leave the Hospital, and who disseminate through all parts of the British territories the knowledge, experience, and skill which they have here acquired, and extend the benefits of Guy's benevolence, and the memory of his name, to the remotest regions. I trust, therefore, that you will rest satisfied that the Governors in general, and especially that I myself, as the individual amongst them most concerned in the actual administration of the Hospital, will watch carefully over the School with which you have connected yourselves, and that we shall neglect no means in our power of providing you with facilities for the successful prosecution of your studies.

With regard to those studies, you will receive from the accomplished teachers who will succeed me in this place, all the information which oral teaching can afford, and every direction which is requisite for your guidance in your private reading. Consider them as your friends, and do not hesitate to apply to them for the solution of any difficulty which presents itself to you, either in the lectures which they deliver, or in your own books. It may be right, indeed, that I should here remind you that neither reading nor listening to lectures will of themselves make a really scientific and trustworthy practitioner, and that it is only by carrying with you

what you have heard and read to the dissecting-room and to the wards—by the careful, unremitting, and continued examination of the structure of the human frame in the one, and of the effects of accident and disease, and of the remedial processes of nature and of art, in the other, that you can become actually acquainted with your profession, and qualified to undertake the management of your fellow-creatures. These considerations, however, have of late been so much insisted upon, and they will so naturally present themselves to your own minds, that I do not feel it necessary to dwell upon them. I would merely, before I pass on, guard you against what I conceive to be a common mistake of students; viz. to confine their attention to the more aggravated cases, and to neglect those of a less severe character. I believe that there is no case admitted into this Hospital from which there is not a great deal to be learned, and that a student will do well to familiarise himself with the incidents and progress of comparatively simple accidents and disorders, and to make sure that he understands *them*, before he proceeds to the analysis of those of a more complicated description. But, without laying further stress upon the necessity of attention to ward-practice, there is an error of an opposite description, against which a warning may be more requisite. The popular cry, at the present day, is against *over-lecturing*. There is some foundation for it; but the cry is so loud, and it is naturally so agreeable to the ears of a student,

that I think there is some danger of its leading to the undue neglect of one of the most important instruments of medical education. There can, indeed, be no doubt that if a student should devote himself to the lecture-room, to the sacrifice of dissection and of attendance in the wards, he would commit a grievous mistake. But I believe that this is, after all, a not very common case. I believe that a diligent student will generally find time for *all* his duties, and that the most regular attendant in the lecture-room will also be most frequently found in his place in the dissecting-room and in the wards. Whilst, then, on the one hand, you do not *over*-estimate lectures, or depend upon them as self-sufficient, take care, on the other, that you do not allow any feelings of indolence to induce you to *under*-value them. Rather should you listen the more attentively to the discourse of your teacher, the more deeply you are impressed with the necessity of testing, working out, and applying the information which he communicates. The more zealous and enterprising an intelligent traveller is, the more careful will he be in the study of his charts.

Of the only two means, indeed, by which the students of one age can appropriate to themselves the stores of knowledge which have been accumulated in the ages that have preceded them, viz. books and oral instruction,—indispensable as both are, there can, I think, be little doubt that oral instruction is the most important. It is not merely that

the information so communicated is the most fresh, that it gives the hearer the benefit of the very last discovery, that it imparts to him the results of the most recent investigation,—it is not only that the living book (as the lecturer may be called) can apply himself to the explanation of the diagrams, or models, or dissections which he places before you, with a particularity and a completeness which his inanimate colleague, though directed by the happiest and most lively pen, can never be made to approach,—but the especial and the inestimable value of the living teacher I take to consist in this, that he can both question and be questioned by his pupils,—that, on the one hand, the lecture-room gives the student the means of getting difficulties solved in a minute which might have puzzled him for a week, whilst, on the other, it enables the lecturer to ascertain, and supply on the spot, the deficiencies of his class, and, by occasional questions,—by more or less of catechising, in short,—at once to keep up the attention of his hearers, and, what is most important of all, to awaken them to a knowledge of their own weak points.

To your professional instructors, then, you will look both for information upon the specific subjects of their lectures, and for your general guidance. The last duty, that of general direction and assistance in your studies, though incumbent upon all, devolves more particularly, in this Hospital, upon the Demonstrators in Anatomy, to whom, therefore,

I would especially refer you. It would be no less unbecoming than futile in me to attempt to invade their province, and to point out to you in detail to what you should turn your attention, what you ought to read, and what you ought to do. I will content myself with one observation upon the subjects of your study, and one remark upon the spirit in which your studies should be pursued, in both of which I have a full conviction that I shall be borne out in what I say by your regular and authorised teachers. With regard to the former, let me impress it upon you that it is altogether impossible for you to attach too much importance to the study of anatomy. Whether your ultimate views be directed to the practice of Medicine or Surgery, if you aim at being anything more than mere empirics or quacks, it is indispensable that you should have a thorough, intimate, and familiar acquaintance with every part of the structure of the human frame. You cannot bestow too much labour upon the acquisition of this knowledge; you cannot take too great pains to preserve and keep it up. But here I would remind you that the complete knowledge of the human body cannot be acquired simply by the use of the knife, and that the minute and final analysis of its structure requires the aid of chymical treatment. I would have you remember that the application of chymistry is an essential supplement to, if indeed it may not be more accurately termed a branch of anatomy. It may certainly claim to be considered a

branch of that science, for, whilst it differs from anatomy, as commonly understood, in the means to be applied, it coincides with it in the objects to be attained. To open out and make known the composition of the human frame, is the scope alike of the dissector and the chymist: the difference is that the latter begins where the former ends; that, when the knife and scalpel of the dissector have completed their share of the investigation, the laboratory of the chymist carries on the work; and whilst the one displays before you the several parts which make up the animal mechanism, the other acquaints you with the materials of which each of those parts is composed. With regard, indeed, to the common fluids of the body, the blood and the urine, every practitioner is familiar with the use of chymical tests in determining their composition in health, and in detecting the various deviations from their normal condition which are induced by disease. The importance of chymical analysis in ascertaining the presence or the results of poison is also notorious. But it need hardly be observed, that the medical value of chymical knowledge is not confined to these instances, extensive as the range of their application undoubtedly is. The human body is, in fact, packed in every part with chymical laboratories; its whole life, whether in health or in disease, is a series of chymical processes; and it is by the light of chymistry alone that you can hope to understand the functions or nature of either, to

deal with them aright, or, if I mistake not, to make any material advance in medical science.

With regard to the temper in which you should pursue your studies, the one piece of advice which I would wish you to carry away with you this morning is, that you should constantly strive to attain accuracy and precision in your ideas, and not rest satisfied until you have obtained it. Don't be content with hearing and repeating general phrases, such as "a shock to the system," "general debility," and so on; but always endeavour, as far as may be, to get to the bottom of what they mean, to understand the physical conditions which they represent. I say, *as far as may be*, because there is no doubt that, as in every science, so especially in yours, there are many things which you cannot get to the bottom of, and it would be a perverse and mistaken ingenuity in a student to devote to the investigation of obscure questions, the time for which he will find ample employment in making himself master of that which is clear and certain. You must make up your mind to remain through life, and of course, therefore, whilst in *statu pupil-lari*, ignorant of many things. Only I would have you follow up every inquiry which comes in your way as far as you can, and so to examine every proposition that is submitted to you, turning it over and over, and looking at it on all sides, as it were, that you may not fall into the common mistake of imagining that you understand things which you

do not. When you have got distinctly before you the limits of your knowledge, you will always be prepared to extend it, whenever a fact presents itself, or an observation is made, which throws light upon a difficulty which has crossed your path. Another benefit which you will derive from attention to precision, will be that you will not be misled by false systems of nomenclature. You will discover that the names which are given to things are, to a great extent, the representatives of *theories*, of which many, indeed, are legitimately founded upon an extensive induction of facts, but others are of very doubtful authority, and some absolutely exploded. You will not take for granted, for instance, that all the so-called zymotic diseases present any phenomena akin to fermentation.

You will, I think, find help towards attaining the precision and accuracy of ideas upon which I have laid so much stress, (besides many collateral advantages,) by availing yourselves of a very valuable institution of the Medical School at Guy's,—becoming members, I mean, and that not *nominal*, but *active*, members of the Pupils' Physical Society. It has been observed by persons employed in tuition, that they never thoroughly understood their subject until they had to teach it; and I don't know any better plan for a student to adopt, in order to ascertain how much or how little he knows about any particular subject, than to get up and try to expound his views amongst a party of his asso-

ciates. He will learn much in preparing himself for the discussion, if he intends, as I would recommend him to do, to enter heartily into it; but, if he subsequently turns the discussion to good account, and sets himself at work to supply the defects which his opponents' attacks will have exposed in his defences, he will learn much more after it. Of course every speaker must expect, particularly at first, to receive some hard knocks; but he will generally be able, after a time, to give as good as he takes; and the best of the matter is that it is a friendly engagement, in which all parties, the defeated as well as the conquerors, alike share the spoils of victory.

I need hardly refer to the great advantage through life of those powers of speech, of correct and easy expression, which the exercise of public discussion is so eminently calculated to produce and develope. But I would observe to those who have least natural fluency, that, independently of the extent to which the practice that I have recommended may enable them to overcome this defect, (and they may certainly reckon upon its doing so to a considerable degree), the very difficulty which they experience will be useful to them, if they study to compensate their inferiority in elocution by superior knowledge of their subject. Forensic combats, too, like other honourable contests, are admirably adapted to give strength and independence of character; nor would I omit reminding you of the

feelings of friendship and good fellowship, of the *esprit de corps*, as it is called, which associations of this kind so strongly tend to keep up, and which are in themselves so valuable. I trust, indeed, that to be a pupil of Guy's will always continue to be felt, as I have pleasure in believing that it is now felt, to be a subject of honest pride and self-gratulation; that the remembrance of that connexion will operate as a stimulus to exertion, to achieve reputation and to avoid disgrace; that to do honour to, and be honoured at Guy's will ever add zest to success, to incur the censure of the men of Guy's be esteemed a severe aggravation of the penalties of misconduct.

I consider it a meritorious feature in the constitution of the Physical Society, that it does not entail expense; that the annual subscription is of the most inconsiderable amount. And, as it is not every medical student who is possessed of large means, you must excuse my giving you here a word of caution against a rock upon which too many a one has made shipwreck,—I mean extravagance. Let each one of you recollect that any expenditure, whatever it may be, that exceeds his own resources, is extravagance in him, and that it is only by confining himself strictly within his income, at whatever sacrifice, that he can preserve his independence of character, the respect either of others or of himself. Biography is full of examples of men who, from small beginnings, have worked their way to distinguished success; but you will find that they are

all men who have been able to exercise self-denial, and who have not been ashamed of the avowal of poverty. *Per angusta ad augusta*, is no mean or unworthy motto.

But to resume. Of the warm feelings of fellowship which animate and unite the pupils of Guy's, I had an agreeable proof at the biennial festival last spring. And I have no doubt I shall find the same feelings equally vigorous and fresh at every future festival which it may be my good fortune to attend. For the most satisfactory point about the whole was, that the old were as enthusiastic as the young, and that whilst one portion of the meeting was, perhaps, more affected by recollections of the past, and the other by anticipations of the future, all seemed disposed to enter heartily into the enjoyment of the present. Among the excellent speeches which I had the pleasure of listening to on this occasion, I was particularly struck by one from the President of the College of Physicians, in which he claimed, not simply for the alumni of particular schools, but for the Medical body in general, a closer sympathy and union with one another than exists between the members of the other learned professions. I do not know, indeed, whether he was quite right in all that he said upon this point. I think it possible, that in his zeal to extol his own class, he may not have done full justice to those with whom he compared them. But I have referred to Dr. Mayo's speech, not for the purpose of criti-

cising the accuracy of his comments upon other societies, but because I am desirous of repeating an observation which he made upon the distinguishing characteristic, as he termed it, of the profession to which he himself belongs, and which he so much adorns. Remarking that it is the business of the Advocate to contend for the success of the side, whether right or wrong, on which he may happen to be retained,—that the Divine, though employed, indeed, in the inculcation of truth, has to deal only with what is already revealed and ascertained, he observed that it is the honourable distinction and privilege of a Student of Medicine to be engaged through life in the pursuit and *exploration* of truth, in the acquisition and *extension* of knowledge. And, assuredly, my friends, there can be no more noble study, none more elevating to the understanding, or better fitted to refine and purify the heart, than the investigation of the works of Him, who has stamped the whole creation with the impress of His power, His wisdom, and His love. It is not, indeed, given to every one to extend by some striking discovery the bounds of human knowledge, to roll back the clouds that surround and hem it in, to fill up or bridge over the chasms which separate a number of insulated facts, and, combining them under some general law, to unite them to the solid domain of science. It is not, I say, given to every one, by some great exploit of this kind, to earn the applause and rivet to himself the gratitude of the world; although the school

of Guy's may certainly boast of some not inconsiderable achievements, and there may be those amongst my hearers who are destined to extend its fame yet more widely. But, although high distinction must necessarily be the lot of few, there is scarcely any one—I believe it may be affirmed that there is no one—who, if his heart is in the work, may not contribute something of value to that general stock of information, out of which every sound theory has to be eliminated and built up. Every great work, and the science of medicine is one of the greatest, calls for the associated industry and skill of a multitude of labourers, the very meanest of whom may justly account it an honour to have assisted in its construction. For my own part, I had rather carry a few bricks towards the erection of the temple of God, than be the master-builder of the most gorgeous edifice that was ever raised to the service of vanity or sin.

But the medical man has the further gratification of reflecting that he is not simply an explorer of truth, but a dispenser of its benefits; that it is his occupation to apply his knowledge to the service of his fellow-creatures; and that in his daily walk he is following the footsteps of our blessed Saviour, who Himself selected the cure of man's bodily diseases and infirmities, as His credentials in that wonderful mission of mercy, for the accomplishment of which He exchanged the glories of heaven for the contempt and hatred of an ungrateful world.

Well, then, gentlemen, in deciding to devote yourselves to the study of medicine, you have made a worthy choice, and one which, whatever may be the amount of your success, either in reputation or in money, you need not regret. As regards pecuniary advantages, indeed, the emoluments of the medical profession are not, perhaps, on the average, equal to those of other pursuits. It has its prizes, however, and besides the advantage of being free from the risks incident to commercial pursuits, it provides a competence, if not large wealth, to most who follow it with industry, and who do not destroy their prospects by their own faults. It is doubtless a disadvantage that success in the medical profession, more even than in other pursuits, is influenced by what are commonly called accidental circumstances, and that it is liable to be affected by dishonest artifices—that there is no recognised or clear test of professional skill, and that the well-informed and competent practitioner will sometimes have the mortification of seeing the place which he is himself entitled to occupy, filled by a plausible charlatan. The only answer that I can make to this complaint, if it should occur to any one of you—and almost every one has his seasons of discouragement and despondency—is to remind you that chance has, in reality, *no* existence; that ignorance and prejudice, impudence and fraud, intrigue and slander, have just that amount of success, and that only, which is permitted by the all-wise and all-good Disposer of the Universe; that no one can really injure a man

but himself; that, according to the general course of Providence, industry and honourable conduct are attended, sooner or later, with worldly success; and that, if this success is delayed, or if it does not come at all, it is because the postponement or denial of its advantages is better for the individual than their immediate bestowal. A general will sometimes send a good officer upon services involving not only difficulty and privation, but discouragement and even defeat. You yourselves will not unfrequently have to subject those for whom you are interested to the severest treatment. Yet the soldier trusts his commander, and the patient trusts his physician. However apparently unprofitable may be the employment in which the one is engaged, he does not allow himself to doubt its wisdom; however unpalatable the medicine, or serious the operation prescribed to the other, he submits with confidence to the directions which are given him. These trust fallible guides; and shall not we trust Him who is infallible? No one who has borne trials and disappointments with manly fortitude and resignation, will doubt the benefit of the discipline which has been imposed upon him, and we may well confide the direction of our lives to Him who gave them, to the great Captain of our salvation, Himself glorious through suffering, with whom every trial is the destined channel of a blessing, and from whom every sincere effort in His service receives its own appropriate and abundant reward.

Perhaps some of you may consider these observa-

tions, as well as a few others which I am about to make, rather suited to the chapel than to the anatomical theatre, and more appropriate to the Chaplain of the Hospital than to its Treasurer. Certainly, I am not come here to preach you a sermon, but, as I have already said, to give you a welcome. But I cannot do this—I cannot speak to you about the profession upon which you are embarking, without saying a word or two about that, without which your professional existence will be no more like what it ought to be, than the carcase which you dissect is like a living man. My declaration of interest in you would be a falsehood, if I were indifferent to your greatest good. How can I, a man addressing his fellow-men, and especially a senior addressing his juniors,—one who has already travelled over the greater part of his life, addressing those who are journeying along its earlier stages,—be silent about the final purposes for which life is given to us all? Who can think of the number of instances in which the opportunities of youth are thrown away, and the powers, which might have been exerted in laying up a harvest of blessings, are destroyed or debased by indulgence and dissipation, and then address a body of young men, especially of persons with whom he is connected in the manner in which I am with yourselves, without giving them a warning against following the same course? Let me, then, speaking to you as to men of common sense, entreat you to be constantly on your guard, to

cultivate habits of self-control, to have always before you the end of your being, and above all, to seek earnestly the aid of that Spirit, through whose assistance alone the corrupt propensities of our fallen nature can be withstood and subdued.

It is a happy circumstance that a body of medical students may, at the present day, be safely addressed as Christians, and that the flagrant impiety and infidelity at one time so prevalent amongst them, and which might almost be looked upon as a judicial blindness—a punishment for the wilful neglect of the plain lessons set before them in their daily employments—is now seldom met with. And to the Christian, the paramount incentive to virtue will be found in gratitude to the Almighty for the mercies revealed to him in the Scriptures, and in the desire to accomplish his Maker's will, by imitating, as far as the limits of human nature permit, His own Divine perfections. But still it is not unprofitable to the Christian to observe, in the pages even of heathen writers, how deeply the ideas of the dignity and beauty of virtue, of the vileness and loathsomeness of vice—of the one as the healthy, the other as the diseased condition of the soul—are rooted in the very nature of man, and how strong is that innate sense of right and wrong, which, however disregarded, and silenced for a time, still endures even in the basest, giving to the erring spirit, whilst the period of probation continues, the opportunity of retracing its steps,

and, when that is past, arousing within it the horrors of despair. The soul may, indeed, in the language of our own poet, become "clotted" by the contagion of licentiousness, "imbody and imbrute," and *almost* "lose the divine property of her first being;" but the moral faculty within her, the discerner of good and evil, is immortal as herself, and, if not welcomed as a guide, will make itself felt as a torturer. Nor was it an exaggeration of rhetoric, but the simple expression of a sublime yet literal truth, to which the Roman satirist gave vent, when he declared that he could not wish for the most flagitious and execrable of tyrants, the vilest and most abominable of mankind, any severer punishment than that they should have one clear vision of the virtue which they had abandoned, and wither at the contemplation of their tremendous and irreparable loss.

"Virtutem videant, contabescantque relictam."

But why, you may ask, refer to this depth of depravity? Simply, my friends, because no one who begins to go wrong, who deliberately relinquishes his hold of the Divine guidance, can tell how far he may not sink. There is no degree of degradation into which a man may not fall, if he be left to himself; and no one can tell how soon, if he leave God, this may not be his own fate.

But to conclude. You have chosen, as I have already observed, a noble profession. It is noble,

because it is the highest privilege of man to be employed in the service of God, and the highest service of God in which he can be engaged is to do good to his fellow-men. It combines the greatest moral and intellectual advantages. But the praise of your profession assumes that it is pursued in a right spirit. A good action implies a good motive. And a noble-minded physician is one, who, in all that he does, feels himself to be the student of God's works, the adorer of His wisdom, the steward and minister of His benevolence. To all such of you as are thus minded, I desire, in the name of my colleagues as well as in my own, to wish you God speed. May He enlighten your understandings, and sanctify, expand, and warm your hearts. He who is the KING of KINGS, and LORD of LORDS, the same is also the PHYSICIAN of PHYSICIANS. On Him you must depend for the power of healing the bodily ailments of your patients, and to Him you must look for the cure of the moral as well as the physical diseases to which you are yourselves subject. In dealing with your patients, indeed, you will have to regret, at one time, the imperfection of your knowledge; at another, the limits of your ability. But the Physician, under whose care yourselves are, is at once a Being of boundless intelligence and absolute power. With Him no case is desperate, no treatment is susceptible of error. Only give yourselves up, with perfect trust and cheerful obedience, to the directions of this faithful and wise

Physician, and He will gradually purge you from every distemper, heal every sore, and eventually raise you to the full health and perfection of your being. Only follow Him, and He will guide you safely through life ; and when that which is so inappropriately termed the closing scene arrives, His smile of love will cast a gleam over the dark passage which separates the dim twilight of earthly existence from the full sunshine of everlasting day.